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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine how employers make hiring decisions for entry-level jobs. In simulated hiring settings, 56 employers in Columbus, Ohio, were asked to rate young job seekers first from their application forms and then from videotaped interviews. The applicants (aged 16-25) were seeking full-time employment in three fields: clerical, retail, and machine trades. In screening the application forms, the employers considered these factors as most important: relevant work experience, relevant postsecondary program, skills relevant to the job (e.g., typing), good grades, and neatly completed application forms. The two most critical factors in the videotaped interviews were attitude and grammar. Interviews with the employers emphasized their stress on good attitudes, not just for the interview, but also for jobs performance. The study concluded that school administrators should take employers' opinions into account, since the future economic success and job security of their students will depend on the degree to which students are able to fulfill employer expectations. Schools should promote cooperative education programs, emphasize basic skills, and include employability and job search training as part of the curriculum. (KC)

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Education & Employment

Research for the Practitioner

Employer Hiring Decisions

Research Findings

How employers make hiring decisions for entry-level jobs was the focus of this study. In simulated hiring settings, 56 employers in Columbus, Ohio, were asked to rate young job seekers first from their application forms and then from videotaped interviews. The applicants (aged 16-25) were seeking full-time employment in three fields: clerical, retail, and machine trades.

In screening the application forms, the employers considered these factors as most important:

- Relevant work experience
- Relevant postsecondary program
- Skills relevant to the job (e.g., typing, knowing how to operate specific machines)
- Good grades
- Neatly completed application forms

The two most critical factors in the videotaped interviews were attitude and grammar.

Employers' comments in discussions about the interviews reinforced their ratings. These employers emphasized the importance of having a good attitude, not just for the interview, but also for job performance. Employers want workers who exhibit work maturity—that is, good interpersonal skills, a good attitude, and a sense of responsibility.

Implications

It is important for school administrators to take employers' opinions into account, since the future economic success and job security of their students will depend on the degree to which students are able to fulfill employer expectations. Schools should promote cooperative education programs, emphasize basic skills, and include employability and job search training as part of the curriculum.

Counselors can make students aware of the importance employers place on a neat application form and appropriate interview behavior. These activities are most effective at the time when youth are searching for jobs. Counselors can also help students to consider the benefits of holding a part-time or summer job to gain work experience and of taking a postsecondary vocational program rather than entering the job market immediately after graduation.

A guide book entitled *Employer Hiring Decisions . . . A Job-Searcher's Guidebook* has been developed from the data collected in this study. Teachers or counselors can use this guide to help students increase their chances of being hired. A videotape of sample interviews is included in the package as a point of reference for student discussions and assessments. Contact the National Center's Program Information Office for information on the availability of these products.

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Additional Information

The executive summary and final report are available from ERIC as ED245117 and ED245118, respectively. Written by Kevin Hollenbeck, both are titled "Hiring Decisions: An Analysis of Columbus Employer Assessments of Youthful Job Applicants."

A 6-page summary of the study was published in the summer 1984 (vol. 2, no. 9) issue of *Facts & Findings*, a calendar subscription research series. For ordering information on *Facts & Findings* and for availability of the guide for job seekers mentioned here, contact the National Center's Program Information Office toll free at 800-848-4815 or 614-486-3655 (in Ohio and outside the continental U.S.). Cable: CTV0CEDOSU/Columbus, Ohio. Telex: 8104821894

This is the third in a series of eight "research briefs" highlighting findings of research studies on education and employment conducted by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education and sponsored by the National Institute of Education. The summary was prepared by Ruth Gordon of the Resource and Referral Service.

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Classroom materials based on this research will be available in 1986. Contact the National Center's Program Information Office for availability of unique new materials in THE EMPLOYER'S CHOICE series, a package for teaching students successful techniques for getting and keeping jobs.

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